

Theology as Christian Self - Description and Academic Inquiry:

Thinking with Hans Frei on Mission Studies

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DOI: 10.7252/Paper.000053

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Introduction

The aim of this essay is to reflect on the 2015 APM Conference theme “What’s In a Name? Assessing Mission Studies Program Titles” in conversation with Hans W. Frei.¹ In the essay, I focus on Frei’s *Types of Christian Theology* to explore his understanding of theology as both Christian self-description and academic inquiry, which was informed substantially by his analysis of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s proposal to include theology as a professional school at the University of Berlin. It is fitting that Frei’s historical/methodological reflection on the case of Berlin is undertaken in examining metamorphoses of mission studies titles and programs as both cases involve making of the new at the programmatic level of educational institutions. The essay begins with a brief discussion of Paul Ricoeur’s notion of tradition as interplay between sedimentation and innovation to show that, as it was true in the case of Schleiermacher’s correlation of *Wissenschaft* and *Glaube*, changes in mission studies programs and titles involve poetic imagination, especially the notion of experiment (Ricoeur 1984:52-87). Then, this analysis proceeds to, first of all, Schleiermacher’s appeal to the theme of professionalization in his efforts to come to terms with the practical nature of theology related to the context of the church and other social ends. Secondly, intricately related to professionalization, it attends to Schleiermacher’s handling of the problematic of irreducible

1 Hans W. Frei’s contribution in theological hermeneutics, Christology and theological ethics, and theological method has been recognized widely as one of the key impetus in the development of postliberal theology, and its significance for practical theology, in particular, missiology is yet to be fully explored. His major published works are the following: Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); idem, *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997); idem, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William Placher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); idem, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); hereafter cited as *Types*.

Christian specificity of theology in the public of the academy by way of an embryonic understanding of the social sciences.² And lastly, I will conclude with some reflections on the implications that arise from this investigation.

A. Nomenclature and Poetic Imagination

In recent years, some Christian institutions of higher learning have relinquished the birthright of traditional nomenclature of their mission studies programs and adopted names such as Intercultural Studies or World Christianity, and some have offered dual degrees in theology and other disciplines, such as social work. The changes in nomenclature and program are complex phenomena with deep implications, so we raise the question “What’s in a name?” To situate the phenomenon in the larger context of the Christian tradition, it is helpful to consider what Paul Ricoeur says about tradition as interplay between sedimentation and innovation. Sedimentation results from the paradigms that constitute the typology of emplotment, which were originally born from the labor of the productive imagination itself, but through layers of history they culminate in existing forms (Ricoeur 1984: 65-70). Innovation is correlative to sedimentation but functions as its counterpoint. Whereas the paradigmatic order in prefigured world of action is governed by rules leading to sedimentation, innovation is not servile to rules, though it is rule governed than being born from nothing, and makes calculated deviations. Its rule governed deformation deviates to contest sedimentation in order to create something new in configuration and refiguration. Understood within the larger context of the story of Christianity, nominal changes can be an ecstatic moment of *poiesis* that entails both hermeneutics of suspicion and restoration at all levels, including its title, curriculum, faculty hire, and student recruitment, even to the point of the death of the old and the birth of the new.

Nomenclature and program changes are ruled inscribed calculated deviations that suggest something about the present conditions, the actors, and the institutions involved that actualize the story of Christianity through

2 For further discussion on the three publics, the church, the society, and the academy, see David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 3-31.

productive judgment, manifesting interplay between sedimentation and innovation. It is poetic imagination at work in performative mimesis that is not a passive response to the experience of reality but a creative transfiguration of the field of action to achieve meaning and being in history (Ricoeur 1992: 52-55 and 143-148). Administrators, faculty, students, and constituent religious and social institutions, analogous to the readers of a story, are not mechanistically fated and scripted to submissively follow a narrow plot, but critically and constructively enact the tradition, grasp its meaning, experience and express pleasure and/or displeasure, complete the holes and lacunae of indetermination in history (Ricoeur 1984: 77). And as Ricoeur suggests, this interplay between sedimentation and innovation involves creative capacity for proliferation of divergences, especially in art as ethical laboratory of experiments, which accord narratives subversive and dangerous qualities. To be underscored here is the notion of experiment—involving risks of being subversive and dangerous—inherent in prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration shaped by various teleological judgments.

B. Theology as Christian Self- Description and Academic Inquiry

To examine in specific details the experimental character of mission studies nomenclature and programs, it is illuminating to think with Hans Frei about mission studies as either Christian self-description or academic inquiry, or both, especially as they negotiate between internal norms and affairs and external impingements. In his own experiment of interplay between sedimentation and innovation in reconceiving theology, Frei engages Schleiermacher in his essay “The Case of Berlin, 1810.” Frei’s choice of Schleiermacher as his interlocutor is logical not only because he finds his proposal “highly instructive” for his own construal of theology, but also because of Schleiermacher’s vital role in the establishment of theology faculty at the University of Berlin, which eventually became the prototypical German university and the model for many universities in Europe and North America (Frei 1992: 95-116). As the prototypical university, Berlin led the way in promoting the ideals of *Wissenschaft*, which was usually understood as science or theory of reason involving free exercise of rational inquiry into the universal, transcendental principles

that encompass all fields of inquiry and organize them into systematic, intelligible totalities. Its signature mark was free, rational inquiry and this was clearly evident in how the philosophy faculty was considered to be the most important in the university in embodying the ideals of *Wissenschaft*.

However, Frei points out that the birth of this university involved complications because the Prussian government, which had the right to regulate the temporal affairs of the church, employed theologians as members of the state bureaucracy with their right to non-interference as intellectuals but also as instructors of church professionals. It created an awkward situation in delegating the training of ministers to a university that had mixed thoughts about the compatibility of training clergy with its own *Wissenschaftlich* ideals. An intense debate ensued concerning “the public character of the understanding informing theology” in the university because of the challenge to do justice to both church training and *Glaube* as well as to *Wissenschaftlich* principles of general explanation that applied across all disciplines.³

Theology and Professionalization

It is within this context of heated debate on the suitability of theological training in the university that Frei explores Schleiermacher’s understanding of academic theology. Schleiermacher’s proposal was not the only one on the table but eventually was accepted in thinking about the citizenship of theological faculty in the university. He was certainly an academic and recognized fully the preeminent place of philosophy among the university faculties and thought that the task of the university is to teach the young to “regard everything from the point of view of *Wissenschaft*” (Frei 1992: 110). However, he was also “a full-blooded Christian theologian” who would

3 For instance, Fichte responded to the question of the suitability of practical theological training in the university by arguing that any school which proscribes the use of reason and asserts itself a priori as an unfathomable mystery should be excluded from the university. This meant that for theology to be included in the university it had to abandon its claim to privileged knowledge of God and practical instruction in the ministerial arts. Frei comments that there is in Fichte “no hankering after the inclusion of praxis in his notion of theory.” Frei, “The Case of Berlin, 1810,” 106; idem, “Types of Academic Theology,” in *Types*, 118.

not accept the reduction of theology to philosophy, and made a complex argument defending the rightful place of theology in the university by appeals to the traditions of *Weltanschauung*, *Bildung*, and *Kenntnisse*.

All three traditions were important but he made a special appeal to the time-honored tradition of *Kenntnisse* through which he envisioned a union of *Wissenschaftlich* theological inquiry with the professional, practical training of ministers in the church.⁴ Schleiermacher argued for the importance of theology by advocating the legitimate inclusion of professional schools, i.e., theology, medicine, and law, in the university curriculum (Frei 1992: 118, 126-127, and 132). He thought that instructions in professional schools stimulate students to make an intimate connection between theory and praxis in order that they may acquire both practical and conceptual skills that are necessary to master a field. The aim of such professional schools is not necessarily *Wissenschaft* but one of founding the socially indispensable practices through theory in the tradition of *Kenntnisse*, which is defined as “something like the ‘abilities’ or ‘cognitive skills’ requisite for carrying out the given practical work” (Frei 1993: 191). Schleiermacher argued that “Christian theology is ... the compass of those skills [*Kenntnisse*, once again] and practical rules [*Kunstregeln*, rules that are the fruit of practical skill rather than theoretical deduction] without whose possession and use a cohesive direction of the Christian church, i.e., a church government, is not possible” (Frei 1992: 113). On that account, Schleiermacher argued that professional schools do not bear an intrinsic relation to *Wissenschaft*, but because of the pragmatic, socially indispensable nature of their disciplines in the public domain, university citizenship should be granted.

4 Frei, “The Case of Berlin, 1810,” 107. The very structure of the German University reflected its commitment to the *Wissenschaftlich* studies as well as professional training. Unlike the British and French education systems, the German University is an institution between the Academy of Sciences that specializes in pure research and the professional school that concerns itself with instruction of special skills. This meant that in the end the University of Berlin was unable to thoroughly embody the ideal of *Wissenschaft* and resulted in an orderly eclecticism. But Schleiermacher’s response to those who criticized this eclecticism was, “See if you can come up with anything better before you scrap this proposal.” Frei, “Theology in the University,” in *Types*, 111-112.

In this analysis, Frei underscores that Schleiermacher argued for the citizenship of theology in the university on the status of the ministry as one of the professions in the modern sense (Frei 1992: 112-115). His professional understanding of theology was reflective of the legal-institutional and cultural milieu of Germany during that period which viewed theologians as professionals whose expertise was deemed important by the governmental authority for the interest of the public domain. Theologians were not considered as divines but “simply professionals, just as we have intellectuals, novelists, licensed beauticians, and therapists today. There is a whole culture of professionalism, and in regard to theology, Berlin led the way” (Frei 1992: 115). Thus, Schleiermacher’s argument for the place of theology in the university is not made on systematic philosophical grounds but on legal-institutional and cultural grounds.

Theology and Christian Self-Description

Correlative to the theme of professionalization of theology is its irreducible Christian specificity (Frei 1992: 118-119). In his essay “Barth and Schleiermacher: Divergence and Convergence,” Frei recalls Schleiermacher’s position that the three professional schools have “their original *raison d’être* prior to or outside the university” and that they are special schools that the state has established with distinct privileges because of the essential needs they serve in the public domain. Frei writes, “Theology is a practical discipline as a whole and not merely a theoretical or scientific enterprise—either of a transcendental or of an empirical character—with an, as it were, external aim” (Frei 1993: 190-192). Professionalization of theology, more specifically, training of parsons for ministry, with a theoretical foundation in *Kenntnisse* is inextricably linked to external social and practical aims related to the church as a cultural-religious tradition and community. We see here a socio-linguistic turn to the church focused on impartation and acquisition of irreducibly Christian cultural-religious tradition at the primary level of participatory and internal access to a mode of faith, a cultural-religious tradition, and at the secondary level of descriptive and critical appraisals of its norms, conventions, and internal logic.

Frei goes on to note that Schleiermacher’s understanding of theory in professional faculties of theology, law, and medicine was not about the high-powered explanation of the conditions for the possibility of the practice, but

“more like the grammatical remarks that further us in the use and informal reflection on the rules of the use of a language we are learning, to appropriate the language of the later Wittgenstein and his little flock” (Frei 1992: 112). Theology is viewed as a positive enterprise that does not inherently cohere as an intrinsic part of a universal philosophical foundation, e.g., transcendental philosophy, but involves “the acquisition and impartation of the continuing tradition of a community—an ecclesiastical culture, if you will—by means of the proper use of its language under conditions of cultic continuity and social change” (Frei 1992: 112). This understanding of theology is informed deeply by a sense of its own history, a continuity of language and custom commonly understood as tradition.⁵ Simply stated, theology is Christian self-description, though not without mediation, at least, *ad hoc* correlation.

Without denying the importance of *Wissenschaftlich* approach to theology, Schleiermacher stressed theology as part of “the heritable social currency of a specific religious community, the Christian church. Theology is a self-critical inquiry into the use of its language under a norm furnished within that pious linguistic community, especially “the constant transition from the Christian religious affections to their kerygmatic, poetic, rhetorical, and finally their descriptively didactic linguistic shape” (Frei 1993: 191). He identified “the irreducible specificity of Christianity at the primary level of a ‘mode of faith,’ a cultural-religious tradition, and

5 Theology is then for Schleiermacher not found on general principles or specific method with a universal philosophical foundation that unequivocally sets the criteria for meaning, meaningfulness, and truth of theological statements. He argued, “Any purely formal, universal canon of reason which adjudicates the coherence, consistency, and intelligibility of the ‘method’ governing a particular field of study cannot do so in this case,” and “there cannot be a priority to theology of any specific (material) philosophical scheme.... In short, neither formally nor materially can philosophy be a foundational discipline for theology.” What he is concerned about is that philosophical proofs of truth and *a priori* generalization about the meaning of Christian claims would result in a reduction of Christianity to the general ideal of humane culture. Under such a scheme, theology becomes a straightforward application of logically prior philosophical and historical theological insights to logically subsequent and practical matters of the church. Frei, “Barth and Schleiermacher,” *Theology and Narrative*, 189-192.

a linguistic community,” and second, “he claimed it as the second level of the language of the community in expert hands for the practical aim of organizing the skills of governance” (Frei 1992: 114). Frei writes:

Theology ... is a practical discipline; it is in effect part of learning the grammar of a linguistic symbol system; it is Christian self-description under some norm for its specific language use. No matter what it may entail logically in matters of theory, it is part of the praxis, the ruled practice of culture, part of social tradition enacted by a participant, an agent who knows how to use the language in its appropriate context. The formulations of the Christian confessions and their interpretations may be taken that way (Frei 1992: 126).

This is helpful in understanding how Schleiermacher’s understanding of theology as religion specific informed the connections he made between the philosophical, historical, and dogmatic aspects of theology and the practical aim of theology oriented toward worship, preaching, instruction, and pastoral care. It was a strategic move that created space for Schleiermacher to distinguish theology from other areas of culture and their study, and granted the faculty and the students permission to develop “internal or participative access” to its historical shape, reality, and its truth-claims as a universal reality in one particular cultural form (Frei 1993: 189).

In this turn toward the practical and irreducible Christian specificity, Schleiermacher has conferred upon modern theology an understanding of theology that is affiliated with ethics or philosophy of religion in his day or commonly known today as the social sciences, especially social anthropology, which Frei sees as a natural cognate discipline to theology. Theology understood as second-level descriptive and critical appraisals of its own first-level language and actions under a norm internal to the community itself resembles social science more than philosophy (Frei 1993: 127). Frei writes,

Theology is as intimately and basically explained by a sociology of knowledge as by a philosophy of the knowledge of reality. In fact, to the extent that Schleiermacher advocated the primacy of the partial aim of theology within the Church, the nearest discipline to it is a social science that describes, and in describing explains, the way

theological language functions as a part of the web of relations constituting the community of which it is a part (Frei 1992: 114-115).

It is important to note here that theology as Christian self-description is also academic inquiry by way of the social sciences along with other disciplines.⁶

Making a long story short, the University of Berlin was in actuality eclectic rather than embodying a single coherent *Wissenschaftlich* idea, and it embraced the task of training students for the public professions such as theology which could claim an equal right to that of *Wissenschaft* in a university along with the arts and sciences. The university produced an orderly eclecticism, combining the idea of intellectual unity and supremacy of *Wissenschaft* with the actual diversity of an institution of higher learning that included theology as a practical discipline.⁷ It was not perfect but it enabled the preservation and development of the irreducible specificity

6 Frei is wary of general conceptual tools becoming a supertheory that overwhelms Christian specificity, so he suggests that the relation between theology and the social sciences must be kept external so that the use of a social-scientific explanation in theology can remain a flexible and open-ended thought experiment, rather than functioning as an aspect of philosophy as general explanatory theory—*Wissenschaftstheorie*—which becomes a much more basic outlook. Another chief concern in keeping the relation between theology and the social sciences external is to protect the role of intentional agency. For Frei's further discussion on the relation between intentional action and social structure, including his discussion of Peter Winch, Clifford Geertz, Marxist structuralists, and Habermas, see Frei, "Types of Academic Theology," in *Types*, 128-129.

7 Frei, "The Case of Berlin, 1810," 112. Schleiermacher's strategy was a nonreductionistic dialectical relation between descriptive and explanatory modes in the science of ethics—culture and history—which would do justice to "the nonrepeatability and individuality of phenomena and to the distinctiveness of their description from the agent's or experienter's point of view, while at the same time permitting not only appeal to patterns of similarity but to lawlike causal connections between sequential human events and social structures." Frei, "Theology in the University," in *Types*, 114.

of Christian self-description and professional development in academic theology, and at the same time a correlation between theology and *Wissenschaft* under an embryonic understanding of social science.⁸

Schleiermacher's vision for the university was to achieve a dialectical resolution of theology as both *Wissenschaft* and practical, distinctive activity of the church (Frei 1992: 118). Though not without difficulty, Schleiermacher sought to maintain the tension between theory and practice, theology as *Wissenschaft* and church training, state university and church, and between human culture and obedient Christian discipleship as two autonomous equals. His proposal was to mediate between the tension between Christianity as distinctive religious community, which is characterized by certain ritual forms and institutions, a common scripture, and its memory of Jesus as the founder and the image of God, and Christianity as an official institution in the general cultural network of social and intellectual attitudes and arrangements. Both approaches to

8 Frei, "Theology in the University," in *Types*, 113. Under Schleiermacher's adjudication, there is no supertheory by which to mediate between external descriptions and Christian self-descriptions; they are correlated directly from their own autonomous base. There is a direct correlation of internal and external descriptions of the essence of Christianity, the first-order religious discourse about the self-consciousness of Jesus in relation to the feeling of absolute dependence, in which they mutually illuminate the semantic convergences but without surrendering their distinctions under a totalizing theoretical account that mediates as a supertheory. This direct method of correlation is maintained in the relation between theology and philosophy. Schleiermacher thought that moral philosophy and metaphysical reflection led to an idea of a transcendent ground of all being and action, to which we are immediately related in the experience of ourselves as absolutely dependent, but this inevitable idea is elusive and not simply made explicit in general and without attention to particular human communities. So, there is a real reciprocal relationship between theology and philosophy, but clearly philosophy does not function as a foundational discipline. For further discussion on Schleiermacher's understanding of the exact nature of the relation between internal and external descriptions, see Frei's discussion on the essence of Christianity through borrowed propositions from ethics, philosophy of religion, and apologetics. Frei, "Barth and Schleiermacher," in *Theology and Narrative*, 192-194.

Christianity are considered not as necessarily in conflict with each other but as distinct and autonomous realms that are to be brought together in a non-reductionistic dialectical resolution.⁹

C. Lessons from the Case of Berlin

To cull some basic insights from this investigation, there are questions worth considering. First of all, whether situated in a Christian institution or a university setting, how do mission studies programs account for the irreducible Christian specificity of the enterprise? This question may not be avoidable whether the faculty is carrying out participatory internal Christian self-description or external social scientific description. It may be the case that the former uses distinctive concepts that inform the Christian community and while using them she also describes them; the latter describes the concepts without using them; and the difference between the two is one of practice and judgment. If we grant Christianity to be in the first place a socio-linguistic culture of a religious community with informal, practical rules and conventions that govern the semiotic system, one way to conduct mission studies is as a native who has learned to use its grammar as in a language game, and another is as an outside social anthropologist giving voice to the agent's point of view in empirically minded ethnographies (Frei 1992: 12-14). In either case, mission studies entail providing thick descriptions that explain the publicly instantiated internal logic of communal language and action concerning its mission, such as the *missio Dei* or the reign of God (Frei 1992: 135).¹⁰

9 Frei notes that Schleiermacher sought to maintain "genuine continuity with the church's understanding of scripture and to correlate external description and internal description in light of the culture despisers of religion." Frei, "Some Implications for Biblical Interpretation," in *Types*, 66.

10 Frei quotes Geertz, "As interworked systems of construable signs ... culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described." Frei, "The 'Literal Reading,'" in *Theology and Narrative*, 146. On the importance of providing thick descriptions of socially established structures of meaning from the actor's point of view in social anthropology, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 6-20. For a fascinating exposition of Geertz's understanding of culture as a semiotic system with conventions and rules, see

Secondly, whether or not one undertakes mission studies as an internal, participatory process, it cannot be reduced to Christian self-description leading to a sectarian retreat precisely because of its citizenship in the academy. It must simultaneously maintain Christian self-description and academic inquiry that correlates between theology and *Wissenschaft*.¹¹ There may be some truth to Frei saying that “despite qualifications and caveats, the problematic and the span of theological possibilities represented by Schleiermacher’s so-called mediating theology ... are our concern” (Frei 1992: 120). And taking up mediating theology would mean doing constructive theology in an *ad hoc*, eclectic mode of bricolage that maintains theology as both Christian self-description and academic inquiry. As shown above, Schleiermacher opted for a position that is clearly related to the universe of thought and discourse under general rules of coherence, meaningfulness, and faith, but it is also a conceptual skill governed by practical aims in a specific context, i.e., as the church (Frei 1992: 114). There is an attempt to follow both the general rules of intelligibility and the intelligent agent’s social aim. Just as he had eclectically organized the disciplines of the university, the relation between *Wissenschaft* and theology is understood as one of direct correlation rather than strict identification.

Thirdly, what exactly is the nature of the relation between mission studies in the academy and external institutional-cultural aims of the church that are practical and social in character? Coming to terms with professionalization in mission studies would mean defining clearly the nature of the relation between the practical/professional character of Christian missions and its curriculum, faculty selection, and student employment in the public domain. Depending on the identity of the school, mission studies program may or may not be closely aligned with the practical/professional understanding of Christian missions nurturing its ties to the church, mission agencies, and non-profit organizations. In programs with close institutional ties, the issue would, at least, be partially resolved by articulating how it trains its students as professionals in the modern sense to integrate theory and praxis in order that they acquire the requisite skills and competencies for carrying out practical work in

his essays “Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali,” and “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight.” On Frei’s discussion of the hermeneutics of restoration, see Frei, “Introduction,” in *Types*, 12-13.

- 11 Frei observes different configurations, such as between two autonomous, distinctive discourses, or by recognizing the rightful status of one through the priority of the other, or even determining that the two are in principle absolutely different and there can be no real contact between them.” Frei, “Types of Academic Theology,” in *Types*, 118.

mission related institutions. In such cases, nurturing those distinctive conceptual skills needed for the professional response to practical and social challenges in varying contexts deserves attention. This involves imparting and acquiring “the grammar, internal logic, or the first-level statements kept alive in the church” attuned to both the continuities and changes in its norms, patterns, and conventions, and providing second-level descriptive and critical appraisals of its first-level language and practices. And further still, it may also accompany the art of expressing Christian affections in kerygmatic, poetic, and rhetorical forms as well as demonstrating the skills of governance.

And lastly, one of the critical implications of following a social scientific approach to mission studies is orienting one’s program to the socio-linguistic community called the church and especially the missional context of ordinary Christians in the public sphere of the society. Attention to the real, concrete world of ordinary Christians in the public world permeated Frei’s entire work, and toward the end of his career, he sought to do social history from pew-level of the masses of ordinary churchgoers (Higton 2004:185-186). His turn toward ordinary lives of Christians can also be seen in his work with Marxist criticism to deepen the link between the subject and the socio-political realities of the public world. Frei wrote, “Marx understood far more clearly than Feuerbach that man (including his thinking) exists both as the moving, dialectical relation of individual and society and as the conjunction of culture with material nature” (Frei 1993: 250-256). This Marxist insight into the dialectical interplay between the character and social structures reinforced his understanding of the public character of religion in the realm of concrete history of ordinary people where Jesus identified incognito with the poor, the undeserving, the spiritual and economic underclass.

In that light, the question “What’s in a name?” is perhaps best answered by another familiar question “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus answered the question using a parable that stirred the hearts and minds of the listeners about the other and the different. Likewise, we fire up our poetic imagination to experiment with mission studies titles and programs to bear the imprint of our neighbors, regardless of their race, class, and gender, whom we may not prize but they are God’s treasures.¹²

12 H. Richard Niebuhr writes, “The self we loved is not the self God loves, the neighbors we did not prize are his treasures, the truth we ignored is the truth he maintains, the justice which we sought because it was our own is not the justice that his love desires.” H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 99.

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